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Chairman: Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands)

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AGENDA ITEM 98: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 98: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/51/256, A/51/357 and A/51/391; A/51/208-S/1996/543 and A/51/462-S/1996/831)

1. Mr. ABDELLATIF (Egypt) endorsed the statement made at a previous meeting by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Operational activities for development, in which the United Nations had acquired vast experience, were an essential factor in economic and social development. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer resources were being allocated for such activities. His delegation was surprised that the Secretary-General had not submitted a report on the subject and expressed concern that the cuts in overall resources might affect the continuity and effectiveness of activities and the capacity of funds and programmes to carry out their mandates.

2. In that regard, it was not clear whether the reform of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that had been proposed by its Administrator focused on the level of resources or on the Programme's efficiency, and he wondered whether that process would be reviewed by the Governing Council, and whether the Administrator's initiative concerning the reform of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations was a personal initiative or was part of a review of the level of resources to be allocated to operational activities for development in future. Everyone was aware of the pressing needs of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries of Africa, and of the need to support the development efforts of such countries, especially with a view to strengthening their capacity and alleviating the adverse impact of economic reform programmes on the most vulnerable sectors of the population, particularly women and children. It was necessary to ensure the effective provision of such assistance to developing countries.

3. His delegation wished to stress the need to implement fully all the elements of General Assembly resolution 50/120 in a coherent manner. Greater transparency was also needed with respect to the proposed reforms of the United Nations programmes and funds. Such reforms should not be carried out without prior consultations with intergovernmental mechanisms.

4. The CHAIRMAN, referring to agenda item 98, drew the Committee's attention to a note by the Secretary-General (A/51/124-E/1996/44) containing the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), entitled "United Nations system common premises and services in the field" (A/49/629; see also E/1996/43).

5. Ms. RANA (Nepal) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Nepal had been one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government of Nepal had enacted some laws in line with the provisions of the Convention and had finalized a national plan of action, which was already being implemented.

6. Nepal attached great importance to the work carried out by the United Nations development system in developing countries, despite diminishing

resources. Reform in United Nations development agencies, such as UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), was essential to bring about the efficient use of scarce resources at the country level. The implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 had made it possible to avoid duplication in many areas. However, the reforms must be implemented cautiously in order not to affect the most essential programmes such as poverty eradication, health and education. In that connection, her delegation was concerned about the sharp decline in both official development assistance (ODA) and contributions to the core programmes of UNDP.

7. The programmes of action of recent major international conferences had provided basic guidelines on how to solve current problems. In that regard, her delegation appreciated the creation of four different inter-agency task forces to oversee the coherent and coordinated application of cross-sectoral issues agreed upon at international conferences. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, her Government had established the Ministry of Women and Social Welfare. In the area of poverty eradication, her Government was committed to expanding existing credit services, while in the area of education it had declared its goal of achieving universal literacy by the year 2000. At the World Summit for Social Development, Nepal had pledged to continue to intensify and expand literacy programmes and promote a method of participatory development in all government initiatives and programmes.

8. In order to meet the goals of the World Summit and other international conferences, developing countries like Nepal looked forward to the financial and technical support of all donor countries and agencies. Nepal sought social and economic development within a framework of political stability, freedom and justice. While Nepal's citizens currently enjoyed multi-party democracy and fundamental human rights, it had not been possible to meet the high expectations of the people because the means and resources at Nepal's disposal were extremely limited.

9. Nepal's development plans were based on the premise that every citizen had the right to development. Therefore, along with economic liberalization, Nepal was pursuing a development policy focused on people, especially on poverty eradication. Her Government had been allocating an increasing portion of its budget to the areas of child and maternal health and welfare and other basic human services. It had also supported the 20/20 initiative of UNICEF from the very beginning and was already spending more than 20 per cent of its budget on basic social services. Her delegation also supported the resident coordinator system, which would increase the capacity of United Nations development agencies to operate in a more efficient and coordinated manner.

10. The situation of women in Nepal was particularly unsatisfactory. For that reason, the Government's eighth five-year plan for the period 1992-1997 placed special emphasis on improving the situation of women with a view to increasing their participation in the economy and their role in reducing Nepal's rate of population growth, which was essential if Nepal was to achieve a sustainable increase in production and economic growth.

11. The ninth five-year plan for the period 1997-2002 was currently being prepared. The Government was making every effort to include women in the development process. UNDP, UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNICEF and other development agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) were implementing special programmes in many areas to improve the situation of women and also to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Women and Social Welfare in national capacity-building. Her Government was grateful to all those organizations. In that regard, her Government was also conscious of the importance of the assistance of non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and always endeavoured to involve them in all social development activities.

12. Mrs. REBONG (Philippines) said that her delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, in particular with respect to the critical importance of ODA for the operational activities for development of the United Nations system. In that connection, the developing countries had repeatedly stressed the importance of available resources. That was not the only area of concern: the proper functioning of the resident coordinator system, particularly at the field level, and closer cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions were also important.

13. The issue of resources for operational activities, however, was particularly important because, in the view of her delegation, if resources could not be increased on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, the effectiveness of such activities would be seriously impaired, developing countries' development programmes would be jeopardized and, in the long run, international development cooperation would be affected. The developing countries therefore believed that there should be a continuous dialogue on the issue in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Her delegation had hoped that some of the reports on operational activities that had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in July 1996 or, at least, some oral reports on progress in implementing General Assembly resolution 50/120 could have been presented during the current session of the General Assembly.

14. In view of the disturbing decline in the level of ODA resources, a new approach was needed in order to ensure their more efficient utilization. Such resources should be used to finance the development programmes of developing countries. Activities relating to the implementation of resolutions on triennial policy reviews should not be financed from a trust fund. Her delegation was certain that the Trust Fund was constituted from resources that donor countries had earmarked for ODA, and it considered that such activities should be financed from the regular budget of the United Nations.

15. The Trust Fund for Case Studies in Operational Activities for Development should have been a temporary arrangement, and donor countries that had supported the Trust Fund should contribute instead to the core resources of the funds and programmes once the regular budget of the United Nations had taken over those activities. That also applied to the activities, at the Headquarters level, of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development. Her delegation commended the work of that Office and the dedication of the Special

Coordinator to his mandate and its worthy objectives. However, funds for operational activities, which could have been added to the financing of development programmes at the field level, should not be used to finance the activities of the Special Coordinator.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that he believed that the Director of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, at a meeting held on the previous day, had already addressed some of the issues raised by the representative of the Philippines.

17. Mr. OMOTOSO (United Nations Development Programme) said that UNDP fully agreed with the view that it should improve its cooperation with the World Bank. In fact, the UNDP Administrator and the President of the World Bank had already taken steps in that direction. With regard to core and non-core funding, UNDP believed that co-financing should be a key aspect of development cooperation and that core resources were the lifeblood of UNDP operations. Therefore, while UNDP welcomed the increase in contributions of non-core resources, it believed that core resources should remain central to UNDP activities.

18. With respect to the comments of the representative of the Philippines regarding the Office of the Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, which was headed by the UNDP Administrator, he said that the Administrator was supported by a very small unit, the Office of United Nations System Support and Services (OUNS), which was staffed by UNDP. The Office played a key role, since coordination was essential to development cooperation. He therefore agreed with the representative of the Philippines that resources and staff should be allocated to OUNS so that it could adequately provide its important services.

19. Mr. HAMMERLI (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that resolutions adopted as a result of triennial policy reviews of operational activities for development had programme budget implications. Over the past three or four triennial review cycles, the tradition had been established that the Secretariat would not increase programme allocations since that would seriously complicate the preparation of the budget, on the understanding that a trust fund would be established to finance certain activities that arose out of those resolutions. The Trust Fund covered small amounts, since most of the activities called for under the resolutions were carried out by the operational funds and programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, while the Fund was used only to carry out certain studies and prepare reports requested in the resolutions.

20. Mr. KABA (Guinea) endorsed the views expressed by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and said that the serious economic difficulties confronting the Organization had led to a considerable decline in ODA. In future, more needs would have to be met and better results obtained with a constantly shrinking pool of resources; that was a matter of concern to developing countries such as Guinea, which had many pressing development needs. It was clear that like all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, States had to review the priorities of their programmes, plans and strategies in order to make the painful choices that were essential for adapting programmes to available means.

21. The African States were facing difficulties of all kinds in view of the many pretexts for making ODA, which had already been drastically reduced, conditional, and the stagnation or decline in UNDP core resources. In such difficult times, the complex political climate in those States must be taken into account. His delegation was convinced that operational activities for development could be strengthened through the harmonization and simplification of procedures and a more coherent definition of national priorities within the framework of the activities of United Nations bodies at the field level. Operational activities for development should be periodically assessed in order to ensure that they met the needs of States' national objectives and priorities.

22. His delegation welcomed the decisions adopted at the recent Summit of the Group of Seven concerning the need to maintain adequate ODA funding and establish coordination in that area between the United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions in order to harmonize and promote sustainable human development. In cooperation with United Nations agencies and other development partners, Guinea had recently held a country workshop in Dalaba on a strategy for mobilizing and coordinating assistance for the period 1996-2001. The workshop had elaborated a strategy and planning note and a plan of action that required the support of the international community.

23. In view of the economic and institutional reforms undertaken by African States and the need for assistance to ensure the success of those reforms, Guinea pinned great hopes on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which would put the solidarity of the international community to the test and would require African States and their international development partners to take an innovative, coherent and pragmatic approach.

24. Mr. ABDELLATIF (Egypt) requested clarification from the UNDP representative of some aspects of a report which outlined the reform process known as "UNDP 2001", in particular, whether the process had been approved by the UNDP Executive Board, what it involved, whether its scope would be regional or global, the nature of its relationship to the restructuring of the United Nations in the economic and social fields, and its prospects with regard to official development assistance and the provision of financial resources.

25. Mr. OMOTOSO (United Nations Development Programme) said that the report referred to by the representative of Egypt was not an official document, but rather confidential, and that it had been prepared by the UNDP Administrator in response to a request from the Secretary-General to provide him with ideas on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. The Administrator had submitted a number of proposals on reforming UNDP, some of which had been adopted by the Executive Board for the years 1994, 1995 and 1996. A review of the reforms currently under way would enable UNDP to implement more effectively the decisions already adopted by the Executive Board and to improve its management and work methods with a view to the next century.

26. The "UNDP 2001" reform process should not give cause for concern, since it was fully consistent with the current work of the organs and governing bodies of the United Nations, and did not involve any change in the functions of the

Executive Board and the Economic and Social Council, respectively. It would be duly disclosed at the appropriate time.

27. Mr. Myung-Chul HAHM (Republic of Korea) referred to the report of the Secretary-General on progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 (A/51/256), and noted, in particular, the observation that the World Summit for Children had marked the first time that specific, measurable and time-bound goals had been established within the framework of an international conference. He stressed the profound impact which the successful achievement of the targets established for children would have on other United Nations development activities and on the process of following up the major international conferences, and urged all Member States to make every effort to meet them. Notwithstanding the central role of UNICEF in the follow-up process, all United Nations development agencies should strengthen their mutual cooperation and incorporate implementation of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action in their respective programmes.

28. In that connection, the resident coordinator system should be strengthened at the field level and cooperation-oriented dialogue should be held more frequently among the United Nations development agencies, and between those agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

29. His delegation welcomed the fact that 155 out of 193 countries had already prepared national programmes of action, either in final or draft form; the national programmes of action should be based on regional and local realities, such as historical and cultural factors and differing levels of development and capacity, in order to enhance the possibilities of achieving the targeted goals. The national programmes of action should be incorporated into national development plans and should form the basis for implementing joint development activities through country strategy notes.

30. Concerning resources for operational activities for development, his delegation attached great importance to official development assistance, in particular to the portion that was earmarked for the least developed countries and Africa, and supported the statement by the Group of 77 in that regard. General Assembly resolution 50/227 provided valuable guidance in the search for new and innovative funding modalities, and his delegation hoped that the discussions among Member States would result in a more secure and effective funding mechanism.

31. Mr. KA (Senegal) expressed full support for the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In the current context of scarce resources and an unprecedented increase in the amount of work expected of the Organization, the United Nations mandate in the area of operational activities for development must be improved. Otherwise, executing agencies would be unable to fulfil the needs of beneficiaries effectively.

32. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the measures set forth in General Assembly resolution 50/227 and the commendable decentralization efforts undertaken by UNDP in order to strengthen its country offices, where 85.9 per cent of its staff worked.

33. Moreover, the dialogue between the executive heads and teams in the field, held during the recent session of the Economic and Social Council, had highlighted issues which interfered with the smooth functioning of operational activities for development. Innovative measures for harmonizing standards and procedures, administrative services and common premises, evaluation and monitoring were necessary in order to avoid the duplication of work. His delegation believed that national human resources must be used more systematically.

34. Much remained to be done as well in checking the proliferation of meetings of the governing bodies of the development funds and programmes, which could give rise to the marginalization or exclusion of certain delegations, particularly those of developing countries, which were deeply interested in the work of those bodies. In that connection, he referred to paragraph 78 of resolution 50/227, whose implementation would increase the transparency of those bodies and the legitimacy of their deliberations. However, every effort must be made to ensure that the reform process did not mean budgetary reductions and the elimination of certain bodies; that would inevitably lead to the dismantling of the multilateral development cooperation mechanism to the detriment of the developing countries.

35. His delegation was convinced that, however comprehensive and relevant the reform process was, it would be futile unless the disturbing reduction in official development assistance was halted. A solution to the financial crisis afflicting the United Nations must also be found as rapidly as possible.

36. Mr. OMOTOSO (United Nations Development Programme), referring to the statement by the representative of Senegal, said that UNDP programmes were flexible, which had made the large-scale decentralization possible; for example, the resident representatives could approve projects up to the amount of $1 million in their respective countries. UNDP currently had designated nine experimental centres, where the resident coordinators had increased power to approve projects.

37. Concerning the use of national human resources, he said that the national staff of UNDP were among its most valuable resources; in many of the field offices, the only international staff members were the resident representatives and their deputies, while all the others were nationals, who were generally experienced in the work of UNDP programmes and projects, familiar with the culture and language, and frequently had worked for the Government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the mass media.

38. Mr. ZARIE-ZARE (Islamic Republic of Iran) welcomed the fact that the item on the promotion and protection of the rights of children was included in the agenda of the General Assembly, and noted the tremendous strides made by the international community, from the adoption of the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child of 1924 to the convening of the World Summit for Children in 1990, when 27 objectives aimed at ensuring the survival, development and protection of children to the year 2000 had been established.

39. Nonetheless, millions of children throughout the world were currently victims of poverty, hunger and sickness on a daily basis and were even exposed

to the risk of being sold. He noted discrimination even in those deplorable circumstances, for the burden was borne mainly by the girl-child. The chief impediments to the implementation of plans and programmes for children were poverty and the lack of economic growth, particularly in the developing countries. Economic exploitation as a result of extreme poverty, coupled with unstable family structures, led to an increasing number of divorces and undermined ethical and spiritual values. The proper attention must therefore be focused on child-related issues in all United Nations forums where family issues were considered.

40. He stressed that urgent action must be taken in order to enable the United Nations bodies and agencies to implement the provisions of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for its implementation, and to respond to the needs of refugee children and internally displaced persons.

41. His delegation wished to request the Secretary-General to consider refugee children as one of the key beneficiaries of the World Summit and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s. In that regard, measurable indicators and targets could be established. Inter-agency collaboration should be strengthened and the necessary steps should be taken to ensure that the issue of refugee and internally displaced children would be taken into account in the relevant policies and programmes of the United Nations system.

42. As a host to millions of refugees, his country had carried out many activities aimed at alleviating the hardships of the Afghan people inside and outside Afghanistan. To that end, his Government had built hospitals and medical centres to provide treatment free of charge, offered educational programmes for Afghan students, provided medical training, had implemented a plan for the vaccination of 8 million children and provided the necessary services to orphanages as well as food and other assistance.

43. With respect to the situation of children in his country and his Government's policies in that regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had formulated a national plan of action which had been incorporated into the second five-year national development plan up to the year 2000 aimed at implementing the provisions of the Convention. Considerable resources had already been allocated for that purpose.

44. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had recognized his country's work for the benefit of children and had indicated in its report that the Islamic Republic of Iran would attain the goals set by the above-mentioned plan before the year 2000.

45. His delegation fully agreed that operational activities for development should be funded in a comprehensive manner. However, solutions must be found to the financial difficulties bedevilling the funds and programmes of the United Nations. The lack of political will and resolve had been the main cause of the failure of consultations on the modalities for funding operational activities during the past two years.

46. Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund) congratulated the Islamic Republic of Iran on the progress it had achieved towards the goals set by the World Summit for Children. The treatment of refugee children was part and parcel of an inter-agency endeavour agreed on at that Summit. UNICEF had signed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) a memorandum of understanding which accorded priority attention to the situation of children; it had signed another memorandum of understanding with the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the controversial issue of child labour.

47. Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that there was a close relationship between the work of UNESCO in the area of basic education and the eradication of illiteracy and the work of the Organization. Moreover, the collaboration of UNESCO with UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other bodies of the United Nations system, which had produced felicitous results at the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien in 1990 and the Education for All Summit of Nine High-Population Developing Countries held in New Delhi in 1993 was also worth mentioning.

48. UNESCO had organized a Mid-Decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All in Amman, in June 1996, which had showed the continued commitment to the principles embodied in the World Declaration on Education for All. However, UNESCO had found that progress towards the achievement of the goal of universal primary education had been very uneven and that the gender gap was closing too slowly.

49. The UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education had elaborated strategy guidelines on issues such as the education of girls and a more effective monitoring of the goals set by the Jomtien Conference and by the World Summit for Children. The many guidelines set by that Committee had been reflected in the Medium-Term Strategy for the period 1996-2001 adopted in 1995 by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session. Such fruitful cooperation between UNESCO and UNICEF would encourage the two organizations to seek further synergy at the country level with their respective field offices.

50. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, almost one billion adults were still illiterate and over 130 million children of primary school age were denied their inalienable right to education. There was a continuing need for innovative approaches and for strong political commitment on the part of Member States. UNESCO continued to advocate increasing investment in education. Six billion dollars a year would be sufficient to provide every child a place in primary school by the year 2000.

51. She highlighted the similarity between the ideas that had been put forward by the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation at the Second Committee's 3rd meeting and the concept of the culture of peace being advocated by UNESCO. A culture of peace addressed the root causes of conflicts through a long-term approach which promoted development, democracy, the full achievement of human rights and the transformation of values, attitudes and behaviours in order to promote non-violence and solidarity.

52. A culture of peace must be linked to development based on justice and the full exercise of democratic principles. That required a wide range of actions at all levels, from the local to the global. National and regional programmes were needed as well as global formal and informal thematic education initiatives which reflected the everyday lives of people. While the United Nations and UNESCO might initiate actions to promote a culture of peace, the involvement of the countries themselves was essential and should lead to the development of a global movement for the exchange of information and experiences. Lastly, she stressed the leading role played by education in the promotion of a culture of peace.

53. Ms. HOMANOVSKA (Ukraine) said that UNDP should continue to play a key role within the operational activities of the United Nations system. She welcomed the efforts of UNDP to adapt its activities to present realities, particularly the reorientation of its activities for the eradication of poverty, the advancement of women, the generation of the environment and the attainment of sustainable living conditions.

54. She commended UNDP for its work in preparing the latest edition of the Human Development Report, which explored the links between economic growth and human development.

55. However, it was unreasonable to use purchasing power parity for measuring the gross domestic product in international comparisons. The majority of Member States did not recognize the concept of purchasing power parity and its use should be avoided in UNDP publications.

56. Moreover, she disagreed with the data published in the Report on Ukraine's education profile. As had happened in previous editions of the Report, the data presented were completely different from those published in the national statistics and did not reflect the actual situation.

57. In her view, a set of measures aimed at developing initiatives for change specifically the introduction of new criteria for programming UNDP activities should be approved and supported. In future, UNDP should develop a programme approach concept; upgrade a programme harmonization mechanism bearing in mind the economic priorities of the recipient countries; strengthen the monitoring and evaluation functions within its mandate in order to ensure a more efficient implementation of its programmes and projects; harmonize its actions and strengthen coordination with the World Bank and other partners of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

58. Her delegation also advocated further decentralization of United Nations activities, in particular with a view to expanding the scope of the functions of country offices and providing them with access to relevant resources, information, knowledge and experience.

59. The strengthening of the resident coordinator system was of crucial importance in the process of reorganizing the entire United Nations system of operational activities. At the same time, it was necessary to establish the organizational structures of the relevant bodies to meet the new requirements of international technical cooperation. In that connection, her delegation

welcomed the planned reduction of UNDP headquarters staff. However, the central aspect of that issue was the simplification of the UNDP organizational structure, which would also have a positive impact on its functioning.

60. Lastly, operational activities must have adequate financial support. It was therefore necessary to seek new sources and establish new mechanisms, including the effective involvement of the private sector.

61. Mr. OMOTOSO (United Nations Development Programme), responding to the Ukrainian delegation, explained that the data on that country's education profile had not been prepared by UNDP; they had been supplied to UNDP. He would inform his colleagues about that discrepancy.

62. The process of reducing the UNDP headquarters' staff had begun four years previously; thus far, some 600 posts had been eliminated mainly through attrition and offering early retirement packages, ensuring that the process did not cause considerable prejudice to the staff. That policy's aim was to allocate the bulk of the Programme's resources to development cooperation activities and not to administrative costs. UNDP had one of the best administrative costs/programme execution ratios.

63. Mr. SOEPRATO (Indonesia) said that General Assembly resolution 50/120 provided a more comprehensive framework for the integration of all the elements that made up the Organization's operational activities. While considerable progress had already been made in the implementation of that resolution, many of the objectives had been hindered by the significant shortfall in financial resources. The core dilemma stemmed from the fact that there was a sharp decline in resources even as the need for technical assistance increased. That regrettable trend included a 9 per cent reduction in UNDP core resources for 1996. That situation had been compounded by the substantial decline in official development assistance, which had fallen by as much as 25 per cent over the past four years. Likewise, the commitments to the tenth replenishment of the International Development Association had not been fully met.

64. If that adverse situation persisted, the developing countries would find it increasingly difficult to meet their development goals and the ability of the United Nations development system to fulfil its mandate would be jeopardized. At the same time, there was a danger that commitments agreed to at recent major international conferences might not be fully implemented. While Governments were primarily responsible for mobilizing their own resources at the national level, developing countries could not alone pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. They needed substantial increases in resources in order to ensure that their operational activities for development could progress on a continuous and assured basis.

65. He urged donor countries to fulfil their commitments and pledges not only in a spirit of partnership for development, but also with a view to strengthening the global economy, peace and stability throughout the world. His delegation, which considered it extremely important to seek new and innovative funding, was of the view that collaboration and cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions should be further strengthened, without introducing conditionalities.

66. His delegation was grateful for the untiring efforts of the funds and programmes to improve their performance and to become more responsive to the needs of Member States. In that context, he welcomed the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), including the convening of a conference on women, trade and sustainable livelihood, to be held in Bangkok in November of the current year, for the purpose of mainstreaming the gender perspective not only in the activities of the United Nations but also in activities at the national level.

67. Ms. LEBL (United States of America) said that over the past several years her country had been working with other Governments, the Secretariat and staff and management of the funds and programmes to create a United Nations that worked better and cost less, responded to crises more rapidly, and focused its efforts on important tasks that it was well suited to perform. At the most recent Summit of the Group of Seven, the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in economic and social development had been underscored, and it had been recommended that an intensive review of United Nations development activities should be undertaken in order to improve coordination, eliminate duplication of tasks and determine what activities should be consolidated with UNDP.

68. After noting that there had been some encouraging trends in the agencies carrying out operational activities and expressing the hope that they would share their experiences with a view to strengthening the reform of the system, she reviewed the work of some United Nations bodies and agencies.

69. UNDP, a pioneer in management and administrative reform, had actively worked to reduce its staff, especially at headquarters, increase accountability, and directly involve its employees in reform through the change management process. It had also instituted a new programming process that put greater emphasis on performance in determining country allocations. Her delegation supported the new programming arrangements and believed that they would lead to better designed, higher impact projects, from which lessons could be learnt to improve development programming across the board. Recently, UNDP had signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to strengthen their relationship. In that regard, close collaboration between the funds and programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions and other organizations in the United Nations system was critical to helping countries formulate and implement sustainable development strategies.

70. She welcomed the progress in revitalizing UNIFEM and supported the Fund's focus on economic and political empowerment for women. However UNIFEM, as a small voluntary fund associated with UNDP, must be careful not to overextend itself or duplicate the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women or of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), with which it should coordinate its work in order to maximize the impact of money spent and ensure that all its activities were value-added priorities. She encouraged UNIFEM to focus on projects that had a measurable impact and benefited women at the national and regional level, rather than a small group of women in a particular country.

71. UNIFEM seemed to enjoy a comparative advantage in working with non-governmental organizations on network-building and advocacy projects, such as helping women's groups to influence national policies. Her delegation hoped to see UNIFEM build more of its projects on those strengths and was encouraged that it would be developing a strategy and a business plan that would better equip it to carry out its mandate.

72. Her delegation was impressed by the work which the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) had done to improve its evaluation and monitoring of projects. It particularly appreciated the frank assessment of project strengths and weaknesses and hoped that the Fund would share its experience and methodology with its United Nations partners. Impact evaluations and project designs that included testing of assumptions and well-defined success criteria must become a standard tool of United Nations funds and programmes in the twenty-first century.

73. Her delegation was pleased that UNFPA was providing more budget authority to country directors in the field, thereby improving efficiency. It commended UNFPA coordination with the World Bank to ensure the effective use of resources and noted that UNFPA had also reduced the percentage of its costs attributable to administrative support, thereby freeing a greater proportion of resources for programming.

74. UNICEF stood as one of the most dynamic examples of reform within the United Nations system. Since a management study of UNICEF had been completed in 1994, the Fund had embarked upon a major and successful reform effort known as the Management Excellence Programme. UNICEF had also improved its coordination with other United Nations agencies. A memorandum of understanding to improve emergency preparedness and action had been signed with UNHCR and other such memorandums were under consideration with other United Nations partners.

75. UNHCR had also launched an innovative reorganization process, known as Project Delphi. Its new management structure was designed to rationalize and streamline headquarters functions in order to avoid duplication and more effectively support field operations.

76. In 1995, the World Food Programme (WFP) had combined the contributions of many of the world's governments to feed some 50 million people at risk, an achievement unprecedented in human history. It had demonstrated a marked increase in efficiency by moving increasing tonnages of food without a proportionate rise in overheads. The WFP financial management improvement project had enhanced controls in the field, reduced the backlog of field reports, integrated headquarters and field financial components and improved financial reporting to donors. A series of new memorandums of understanding with UNHCR and key non-governmental organizations had also led to increased coordination and efficiency, resulting in less waste and more mouths fed at lower cost.

77. Of course, much remained to be done: poverty and deprivation were still constants in many parts of the world and the United Nations still needed to become more effective in helping the world's poor to help themselves to achieve a better life. Greater coordination and sharpening of focus were needed

throughout the system. Her delegation recommended therefore that United Nations development agencies should make a concerted effort to foster communication and coordination among themselves, not only at the managerial level but also, and most importantly, at the desk officer level.

78. The Member States of the United Nations, for their part, must redouble their efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the resources already available to multilateral agencies involved in development. The improved performance of those resources would generate immediate benefits for the people who so desperately needed their assistance, and better results would, in turn, attract increased contributions for the programmes that worked well.

79. Ms. HEYZER (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women), responding to the questions raised by the United States representative concerning UNIFEM, said that the Fund was a strategic, catalytic agency whose work would be evaluated on the basis of its results, sustainability, impact and accountability.

80. UNIFEM was investing its scarce resources in areas where it enjoyed comparative advantages, with a view to bringing about changes in the system whose effects would be felt at all levels. It had identified five areas of activity on which to focus its efforts: strengthening of women's organizations; possible changes in the building of partnerships; women's integration in development; implementation of experimental projects; and focusing on experience gained and the use of practices that had proved more successful.

81. UNIFEM was aware of the need to build strong partnerships within the United Nations system and was therefore working closely with the Division for the Advancement of Women and INSTRAW and studying the possibility of developing joint programmes, the details of which would be finalized when strategic plans were drawn up.

82. Mr. TALBOT (Guyana) associated himself with the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, reiterated his delegation's support for operational activities for development and expressed appreciation to UNDP and other funds, programmes and agencies involved in such activities for their efforts to deliver assistance and support. At the same time, his delegation was concerned at the decline in official development assistance for funding long-term development activities.

83. His delegation supported the appeal made by the Associate Administrator of UNDP for increased contributions to bolster the Agenda for Change adopted by the Executive Board at its annual session in 1995. Funding for operational activities, which came essentially from core resources, must be placed on a predictable, continuous and assured basis if the real impact of such activities on development was to be optimized. At the same time, the valuable contribution made to development by non-core resources must be acknowledged and encouraged. His delegation believed that the mobilization of resources from headquarters should be supplemented by efforts at the field level. The considerable experience which the system had gained in resource mobilization needed to be deployed in support of similar efforts being undertaken by governments.

84. Operational activities for development had acquired new significance as a result of the cycle of world conferences held in recent years which had dealt with issues that could not be left to the process of market-based development alone. The strengthening of public policy and, in some instances, legislative, regulatory and monitoring machinery in those areas was, therefore, of vital importance. His delegation's view was that operational activities had a critical and catalytic role to play in support of public policy and action in implementation of the commitments assumed at the various conferences. Operational activities for development should focus on fostering capacity at the domestic level, and that required addressing in an interrelated manner the thematic issues which had been dealt with by the cycle of conferences. It also presupposed greater coordination and interaction between all related organizations of the system both at headquarters and in the field, including the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, which his delegation fully supported.

85. Lastly, he emphasized, as had the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, that the critical and unique role of operational activities for development was to enable developing countries to take increasing responsibility for their own development. Human resource development and capacity-building must therefore be critical priorities of United Nations operational assistance.

86. Mr. OMOTOSO (United Nations Development Programme), replying to questions asked by the representative of Guyana, said that UNDP has established task forces both at headquarters and in its field offices, to deal with follow-up to the major world conferences that had been held in recent years under the auspices of the United Nations. The lead agency in each case was the organization dealing directly with the issue involved. For example, UNDP was directly responsible for matters arising from the World Summit for Social Development, because poverty eradication was among its primary objectives. In that area UNDP was working together with the Bretton Woods institutions. In individual countries the resident coordinators, who had overall responsibility for programme implementation, had established task forces and thematic groups in connection with each of the conferences, while, in the field, the representative of the agency directly concerned took the lead in promoting follow-up activities to each of the conferences.

87. In many cases organizations were set up in individual countries to make preparations for the country's participation in a given conference; often those organizations were subsequently involved in the planning of follow-up activities. Much effort had gone into developing such coordination, but in most cases the activities of UNDP were attended to by the Deputy Resident Representative, while the Resident Representative concentrated on overall coordination and follow-up to the conferences.

88. Mr. GALVARRO (Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, emphasized the importance of operational activities for development as a fundamental factor in seconding the efforts of the developing countries and highlighted the necessity of increasing contributions to United Nations funds and programmes as a means of revitalizing international cooperation for development, in particular, the achievement by donor countries of the targets set for ODA and the provision of such resources on a continuing, timely, assured and predictable basis.

89. The United Nations, for its part, must ensure that the universality, neutrality and multilateral nature of assistance was respected, taking into account the priorities and requirements of the developing countries and in line with those countries' own development policies.

90. The countries of Latin American and the Caribbean needed the support and cooperation of the United Nations system to consolidate the positive results reflected in their basic development indicators. They therefore expressed their great concern at the continuing decline in financial contributions to funds and programmes for development activities.

91. The countries of the Rio Group shared the view of UNDP that the Programme's resources should be focused on four areas of sustainable human development: poverty eradication, environment, the status of women and job creation. In addition, greater and better use must be made of the capacity of national experts so that, through the use of available technology, the maximum return was obtained on resources employed and expectations were met to the fullest possible extent.

92. The Rio Group welcomed the agreements reached at the ninth session of UNCTAD and expressed gratitude to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the key player in the promotion of socially and environmentally sustainable industrial development on the eve of the twenty-first century, which was a basic condition for poverty eradication and the creation of productive employment.

93. The Rio Group supported the implementation of a programme approach in achieving a greater concentration of resources, since it allowed recipient countries and the specialized agency concerned to select and determine jointly the contributions which the agency would make, without ignoring specialized sectors which, by their nature, responded better to a more focused "project approach". It was therefore necessary to carry out a triennial policy review of United Nations operational activities with a view to correcting errors and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. In that connection, the Rio Group supported efforts to delegate authority from the governing bodies of funds, programmes and specialized agencies to local offices. That would make it possible to establish a more fluid and less bureaucratic dialogue and find practical solutions to common problems.

94. The Rio Group believed that the functions and powers of the resident coordinator should be in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 32/197, 34/213, 44/211, 46/182 and 47/199, bearing in mind that the tasks of the resident coordinator should be carried out in accordance with the priorities and criteria set by the competent national authorities and exclusively in relation to operational activities for development.

95. The process of economic liberalization and globalization made it possible for development policies to be applied in all spheres of the complex economic, political and social system, but, at the same time, it constituted a challenge to officials to implement those policies. For that reason, the countries of the Rio Group were particularly concerned that the programmes of actions adopted at the various international conferences should be applied and translated into

reality, as a clear signal of the changes that must take place in the United Nations with a view to improving its effectiveness.

96. Mr. OMOTOSO (United Nations Development Programme), replying to the representative of Bolivia, said that the resident coordinator system was consistent with the provisions of the relevant General Assembly resolutions on the operational activities of the United Nations system, including resolutions 32/197, 44/211 and 5/120. It was a matter now of improving the system and adjusting it to current realities. The resident coordinator had to perform various tasks, including follow-up of international conferences sponsored by the United Nations. In the selection, supervision and training of coordinators, account was taken of the need to improve the effectiveness of the process. Candidates were selected not only from among the staff of UNDP, but also from among staff of organizations affiliated with the Joint Consultative Group on Policy and the specialized agencies of the United Nations. Among the resident representatives who were resident coordinators, many had extensive experience with issues relating to funds and programmes of the United Nations system.

97. As to the use of national technical capacity, it should be emphasized that the ultimate objective of UNDP, in line with the decisions of its Governing Council, was for project execution to be entrusted entirely to national personnel.

98. The countries in which programmes were being carried out had acquired broad experience in the field and the objective of UNDP was to increase and improve their capacity so that it could be utilized by the public and private sectors and by non-governmental organizations, the strengthening of whose capacity was also sought.

99. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had thus completed its consideration of item 98.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.